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Chairperson: Mr. Metelitsa (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Belarus)

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In the absence of Ms. Ogwu (Nigeria), Mr. Metelitsa (Belarus), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 49: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/63/66, A/63/76-E/2008/54 and A/63/225)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/63/304 and A/C.2/63/3)

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(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/63/294 and A/C.2/63/3)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/63/294 and A/C.2/63/3)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its tenth special session (*continued*) (A/63/25, Supplement No. 25)

1. **Ms. Elrington** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM remained committed to ensuring that the General Assembly recognized the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law. Following the establishment of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the adoption of its plan of action, such recognition was needed to ensure effective regional collaboration in and to give full effect to General Assembly resolution 61/197, notwithstanding the various challenges presented by the unique characteristics of the Caribbean Sea, which had more countries surrounding it, and more maritime boundaries, than any other large marine ecosystem.

2. CARICOM also underscored the importance of follow-up and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action, welcoming the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development to dedicate one day of its sixteenth session exclusively to small island developing States. Emphasizing the need for urgent action to assist those States in addressing the worsening challenges resulting from the impact of climate change, it acknowledged the valuable support already provided and reiterated its appeal for increased financing and strengthening of the Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which had an important role to play in monitoring and providing technical support to small island developing States in their implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, particularly during the preparatory process for its review.

3. Given the particularly devastating impact of the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season on Caribbean small island developing States, CARICOM called on the international community to intensify efforts to provide timely humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the countries concerned. The many natural disasters that had affected the Caribbean region in recent years highlighted its vulnerability to climate change; urgent, comprehensive and decisive global action to address that challenge therefore remained a priority for CARICOM. The negotiations currently under way in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must give rise to a comprehensive and ambitious global agreement to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide new, predictable and easily accessible financing for adaptation. In that regard, the scope of the adaptation projects implemented to date in the Caribbean region had been limited owing to a lack of resources and CARICOM, welcoming the commitment already made by Greece, urged its other development partners to consider providing assistance by funding projects and facilitating the transfer of technology and know-how. Despite their negligible contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, the CARICOM member

States recognized collective responsibility for mitigation, supporting renewable energy as an essential pillar of future mitigation and encouraging the development of innovative mechanisms to support sustainable forest management.

4. **Mrs. Osman** (Sudan) said that complex and multi-dimensional global challenges were posing serious threats to efforts to achieve sustainable development, particularly in the areas of climate change, desertification and biodiversity. On climate change, recurrent droughts and floods had created a pressing need for her country to take action on national priorities such as food security, water supply and public health. Its National Adaptation Plan of Action aimed to identify urgent activities for addressing climate change in the light of those priorities; however, insufficient funding, weak institutional capacities and limited infrastructure development posed challenges to its implementation. While contributing less than 0.1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the country had taken steps to make its development activities more sustainable, but it also believed that action on climate change must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Developed countries should therefore make deep cuts in their greenhouse gas emissions and support developing countries through the provision of technology and funding in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner. The special situation of the most vulnerable countries, particularly the least developed countries, must also be at the heart of any collective strategy to combat climate change.

5. With regard to desertification, a serious threat aggravated by the impact of climate change and rapid population growth, the Sudan had ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and called on the international community to provide adequate and predictable resources to assist the worst affected countries in implementing that Convention. As the largest country in Africa, with a huge variety of ecosystems, the Sudan also placed a high priority on preserving biodiversity and had adopted a national environmental action plan to protect and restore its ecosystems and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. It welcomed the decision taken at the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity regarding the transfer of technology and resource mobilization, which were both critical for implementation of the Convention's objectives.

6. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that the global problem of climate change must be urgently addressed in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. A more decisive commitment from the developed countries was therefore required, in line with their historical responsibility, together with greater international support for the adaptation measures of developing countries, which were more vulnerable to the impacts of global warming. The Committee should promote widespread acceptance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the main focus of negotiations on climate change; following the major decisions reached at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, held in Bali, it was important to avoid creating parallel agendas.

7. As a country that enjoyed an extremely diverse natural heritage, Colombia had been working to conserve, restore and manage its ecosystems and ranked ninth in the Environmental Performance Index 2008 developed by Yale and Columbia Universities. The huge efforts made by countries such as hers in both human and financial terms to protect the environment required greater international support. The international community should, in particular, support Colombia's programmes to eradicate illicit drug cultivation — which resulted in deforestation, desertification, destruction of ecosystems and depletion of water resources — on the basis of shared responsibility for the global drug problem. Progress must also be achieved in negotiations on the international regime on access and benefit-sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

8. Given the important role played by the United Nations system in environmental matters and the need for better coordinated and more efficient international governance, the Assembly should work to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a priority.

9. **Mr. Kononuchenko** (Russian Federation) said that his country had been consistently involved in United Nations efforts aimed at implementing Agenda 21, the

outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

10. UNEP continued to play a key role in addressing current environmental problems. His delegation commended the outcomes of the tenth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and also noted with interest the measures being taken to improve its structure.

11. The adoption of the Bali Action Plan by consensus in December 2007 was a real step forward in international efforts to combat climate change. The forthcoming fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Poznań, should also make a worthy contribution to the post-Kyoto regime.

12. It was important to continue international efforts to conserve biodiversity and to combat desertification. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the steps taken to implement the outcomes of the latest Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

13. The Commission on Sustainable Development should bring to a successful conclusion its cycle of work on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The current food crisis made the Commission's work all the more relevant. All Member States should do their utmost to ensure that the decisions of the Commission's next session duly reflected the latest trends with respect to agriculture and its role in national development strategies.

14. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was the appropriate forum for continued cooperation in natural disaster prevention and mitigation. The dialogue held in that context should remain informal and non-politicized and it was also important to have effective working relations between the Platform and the General Assembly.

15. There was a need to focus on disaster forecasting, preparedness and rapid reaction on the part of national and international humanitarian agencies. It was also necessary to strengthen early warning systems and to improve damage assessment and disaster mitigation efforts. To that end, the international community should increase its cooperation in those areas, including by exchanging experience and information and by providing training.

16. **Mr. Bendourou** (Morocco) said that his country had made environmental protection a key factor in its economic and social development by pursuing an environmental policy based on the concept of sustainable development. Among the many reforms implemented, it had taken a range of legislative and institutional measures to preserve its water resources and had introduced a new irrigation development strategy as part of its efforts to develop a sustainable agriculture.

17. In view of the major climate-related, geological and biological risks it faced owing to its geographical situation, and aware of the economic and social impact of natural disasters, Morocco had strengthened its natural disaster risk reduction policy over the past decade, its ultimate objective being to reduce significantly both the number of victims and the scale of the material losses caused by natural disasters. Its strategy was structured in accordance with the priorities set out in the Hyogo Declaration, while it considered risk prevention to be a responsibility shared by the State and its citizens.

18. Since the reality of climate change was no longer in doubt, his country was working with other developing countries to foster concerted multilateral action to conclude, within the agreed time frame, a new climate treaty that should facilitate developing countries' adaptation to the effects of climate change, as well as mobilizing additional investments and adaptation technologies in strategic sectors such as energy, water management, agriculture and forests. Morocco placed particular emphasis on the strengthening of national reforestation programmes, as well as calling for greater international cooperation and for a partnership approach to the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. It also advocated an action plan focused on the use of early warning systems, vulnerability mapping and risk assessment to identify national priorities for short- and long-term adaptation to climate change. In response to the specific challenges of its arid climate and ever longer periods of drought, it had developed a national programme of action to combat desertification, based on a participatory approach involving all the various actors and partners concerned.

19. **Mr.** Thaung **Tun** (Myanmar), stressing that sustainable development could not be achieved without effectively addressing the problem of extreme poverty, said that his country had adopted the Myanmar Agenda 21 in 1997 to ensure that environmental and sustainable development policy considerations were incorporated into decision-making in the economic and social sectors. Moreover, in 1995 it had introduced a new forest policy to promote sustainable forest management while meeting socio-economic and community needs and conserving biological diversity and environmental stability; remedial measures were also being taken to counter the adverse effects of encroachment on forest lands for agriculture, industry and housing, among other factors, and his Government had been taking effective conservation and preservation measures to protect wildlife and plants and extend existing forest areas. Since agriculture was the mainstay of its economy, his country had developed national plans for agriculture in order to promote economic development, provide food security and alleviate poverty, while also taking steps, such as improving the content of livestock feeds, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

20. Cyclone Nargis was the worst natural disaster to have hit Myanmar in recorded history. The country had mobilized relief and rehabilitation activities in the affected areas and had also requested and received emergency assistance from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund. Its national medical relief efforts, complemented by civilian medical teams from a number of other countries, had succeeded in averting the outbreak of epidemics. Climate change, as evidenced by the impact of cyclone Nargis in his country, could have a serious impact on Governments' efforts to promote economic and social development and must therefore be addressed through concerted international action, which would involve new and additional resources being made available to developing countries for adaptation and mitigation measures.

21. **Mr. Ben-Tura** (Israel) said that urgent action was needed to ensure environmental protection and to combat climate change, which threatened the sustainable development of all countries, both rich and poor. Welcoming the conclusion of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/304) regarding the need for broad participation in implementation of sustainable development principles, his delegation considered that exchanges of lessons learned and best practices could boost efficiency and facilitate the incorporation of those principles in national development plans; the Commission for Sustainable Development could serve as a productive forum for such exchanges.

22. Israel had made progress in sustainable development and believed that it was therefore in a position to share knowledge and expertise with other States and regions, particularly in the area of water management. In response to the physical scarcity of water in its region, it had developed various affordable management resources, such as water recycling, sewage reprocessing and desalination, based on sustainable development principles. Such measures also dovetailed with its efforts to combat desertification; having been one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention to Combat Desertification, it was active among the northern Mediterranean countries that had established a portal for the exchange of metadata on desertification and was working to provide knowledge and training to other countries. It was also considering initiating a forum to improve synergies between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

23. In contrast to the overall decline in domestic public expenditures by countries in their agricultural sectors since 1980, mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/304), his country had continually advocated the role of agriculture in development and had invested resources to develop technology and know-how in that sector. In June 2008 its Centre for International Cooperation had signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme in Africa for cooperation on agriculture.

24. **Ms. Legarda** (Philippines) said that her country fully subscribed to the principle of balance of commitments enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and had therefore submitted proposals for more responsive financing and technology transfer mechanisms under the Bali Action Plan in order to rectify the current unpredictable and inadequate levels of funding, which were inconsistent with those commitments.

25. Greater focus should be given to adaptation rather than mitigation efforts under the Convention. In order

to adapt to climate change it was necessary to reduce underlying vulnerabilities, build response capacities and manage climate risks, which would entail a proactive and preventive national strategy. Her country's commitment to the Convention had been demonstrated by its adoption of comprehensive policies that balanced development and environmental protection within the framework of sustainable development.

26. Parliamentarians from countries vulnerable to climate change had recently held a consultative meeting in Manila, where they had advocated disaster risk reduction policies not only as national and community priorities but also as a cost-effective means of adapting to climate change. Effective disaster reduction at the national level was provided for by the Hyogo Framework for Action. The process of transforming that Framework should therefore be made into an internationally binding legal instrument.

27. The Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance recently held in Manila had adopted the Manila Declaration on Gender in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, which called on Governments to comply with their international commitments to gender equality and to pursue gender-responsive plans and strategies. At the same time, it was vitally important to constantly review all such strategies in order to keep pace with any new developments that might increase the effectiveness of efforts to combat climate change.

28. **Ms. Ithete** (Namibia) said that the issue of land remained at the heart of sustainable development, and that she wished to focus on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Her country was particularly vulnerable to soil erosion caused by heavy rains following periods of drought, which was the starting point of the desertification process. It promoted community-based natural resource management in the belief that ecologically sound resource management would ultimately contribute to poverty reduction and good governance. With the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it had implemented the Country Pilot Partnership for Integrated Sustainable Land Management. She called on the international community to substantially increase its allocations for the land degradation focal area of the GEF during the next replenishment of the Global Environment Trust Fund. As regards desertification, prevention was cheaper than cure. She was encouraged by the close cooperation between the secretariats of the Rio Conventions and the Commission on Sustainable Development and looked forward to participating in the Commission's upcoming seventeenth session.

29. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that poverty reduction was the key to sustainable development, but that steps to address the various global crises should not lose sight of the goal of environmental sustainability. Her own country's efforts to increase agricultural production respected environmental principles such as maintenance of transboundary basins. The role of the United Nations as intermediary between the developed and developing countries was more crucial than ever in facilitating technology transfer and ensuring the type of investments in agriculture that would enable grain-exporting countries like hers to contribute to alleviation of the global food crisis. Her country was trying to make a "technological leap forward" in sustainable water and energy use and was pursuing partnerships in that endeavour with the non-governmental sector, in line with recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It had harmonized national measures with international practice in its 2007 National Environmental Code, and had recently ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Kazakhstan was to host a conference of ministers of environmental, economic and social affairs from the Asia-Pacific Region in 2010 and from Europe and Asia in 2011.

30. She expressed gratitude for international assistance with the disasters associated with the drying up of the Aral Sea and nuclear waste in the Semipalatinsk polygon, and appealed to Member States to support the draft resolution calling for observer status for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. Her country supported the Hyogo Framework for Action and called for the establishment of more national and regional disaster prevention centres.

31. **Mr. Loh** (Singapore) said that the world's urban population was about to surpass its rural population for the first time in history, which would place an enormous strain on development infrastructure, in Asia in particular. A balance would have to be struck between the resulting increased demand for energy and environmental concerns. As a densely populated island State with no natural resources, his country provided a

good model for that balance, with its judicious use of limited land resources and robust control of its traffic and air pollution. It was also experimenting with advanced water treatment technology, including seawater reverse osmosis for desalinization, and had allocated US$236 million to develop its limited wind and solar resources. It had hosted the World Cities Summit during the recent Singapore International Water Week and planned to do so again in 2010. Developed countries needed to set an example in emissions reductions to encourage developing states not to allow development needs to overshadow environmental concerns.

32. **Ms. Bensmail** (Algeria) said that speculation in agriculture and the financial markets, bad trade policies, natural disasters and climate change were all to blame for the current crises. The upcoming seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would offer an opportunity for further progress toward the goals of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Her country had taken concrete steps to bolster the three economic, social and environmental pillars of development in its national plans to develop agriculture and fight poverty, desertification and deforestation, which had been accompanied by economic reforms to promote private sector involvement. Her country's Minister of the Environment had been the honorary United Nations spokesman for the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006, and its 2007 proposal to UNEP had resulted in the designation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. She welcomed the ten-year strategic plan adopted at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and hoped for further progress on climate change at the upcoming Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

33. **Mr. Osuga** (Japan) described the outcome of the Group of Eight Summit in July and the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) in May, as well as his Government's actions in the relevant areas. The leaders comprising the Group of Eight had shared the view that the challenge of climate change could be met only by contributions from all major economies, consistent with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. They had declared that they would seek a reduction in global emissions of at least 50 per cent by all parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, by 2050. As the forthcoming Climate Change Conference would examine proposals for the post-2012 framework, Japan had in September submitted its proposals for an effective framework in which all major economies would participate in a responsible way to achieve global emission reductions.

34. The Group of Eight leaders had also declared that they would continue and enhance cooperation with developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, in their efforts to adapt to climate change, including in the sphere of disaster risk reduction.

35. As part of its effort to deal with the effects of climate change, Japan had set up the Cool Earth Partnership at a level of $10 billion and was extending assistance to developing countries that sought to combine emissions reductions with economic growth. The Cool Earth Partnership had been welcomed by the delegates from 51 African countries at TICAD IV.

36. Water and sanitation formed one of the key development areas closely related to climate change and the MDGs. The participants in the Group of Eight Summit had declared that they would promote integrated water resource management, with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. The participants in TICAD IV had also acknowledged that it was essential to promote the sustainable use of water resources. Since the 1990s, Japan had been the largest donor of official development assistance (ODA) in the water and sanitation sector, and was determined even to increase its efforts to assist developing countries in that area.

37. In the area of biodiversity, the Group of Eight leaders had endorsed the Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity, which called upon all countries to work together to promote actions in the following areas: 2010 Biodiversity Target and follow-up actions, sustainable use of biodiversity, protected areas, private sector engagement and scientific capabilities for monitoring. The year 2010 would be the International Year of Biodiversity, during which Japan would host the tenth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

38. There was no doubt that international environmental governance must be further strengthened. Effective use must be made of the

knowledge and expertise accumulated within UNEP and existing multilateral environmental agreements, through creating synergies and promoting coherence. Promotion of education, public awareness and training were vitally important to sustainable development. The participants in TICAD IV had acknowledged the importance of promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives, while the Group of Eight leaders had declared that they would promote ESD by supporting UNESCO and other organizations in encouraging a more sustainable and low-carbon society. Japan was fully committed to contributing to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

39. **Mrs. Zemene** (Ethiopia) observed that the Secretary-General's report in document A/63/304 clearly explained the impact of climate change causing millions of people to fall back into poverty. Ethiopia strongly supported the focus in the report on helping developing countries to expand agricultural production.

40. Ethiopia was a party to the most important international environmental conventions, in particular those covering climate change, biodiversity and desertification. It had a National Action Plan of Environmental Protection, designed to bring about sustainable development and to address multi-faceted environmental issues. The year-long celebration of the Ethiopian millennium, which had just concluded, had rallied millions of people behind the idea of reforestation and its tree-planting agenda had been accorded due recognition at the international level.

41. In connection with the current rises in global food and energy prices, the anticipated focus on a green revolution to address the food crisis, and the quest for alternative sources of energy including biofuels, were closely associated with the environment. If the sustainability of the environment was to be maintained, countries needed to strike the right balance between increasing production of food crops and the search for alternative sources of energy.

42. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by natural calamities, lack of capacity and insufficient financial resources, Ethiopia focused on raising awareness in the rural population of the need to combat desertification, enhance dry-land farming and use renewable energy. Importance was also attached to consolidation of the capacity of local institutions in order to minimize the impacts of environmental change on the agricultural sector.

43. Support from development partners was crucial to augment the national efforts of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. Capacity-building and technical assistance ventures to strengthen indigenous techniques for environmental protection, methods of cleaner production in agriculture or in industry, and support for efforts to fight desertification were of paramount importance.

44. **Mr. Hirsch** (Norway) said that the potential ravages of climate change might be so severe as to nullify development efforts in poor countries. Millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa alone could die of diseases directly attributable to climate change; progress already achieved could be reversed. Steps taken to deal with poverty and with climate change must be mutually reinforcing; the world could not choose between development and environment. In order to develop, developing economies would require more energy. But the goal must be economic growth without emissions growth, which would require increased emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

45. At the same time, for perhaps another half-century, the global energy mix would probably still be dominated by fossil fuels. Thus, even with major technological breakthroughs in renewables, it was vital to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the production and use of fossil fuels. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) was one of the most promising technologies in that context. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, CCS could ensure about 20 per cent of the global reductions in emissions that had to be achieved by 2050, about the same proportion as could be expected from renewable energy. Norway had embarked on an ambitious CCS programme, being one of the few countries that already had significant practical experience of the process. Within a few years, it aimed to operate a full-scale carbon capture and storage facility. However, worldwide deployment of CCS could be achieved only through international cooperation. The developed world had a special responsibility to develop the technology, and to create a financial framework that would make it commercially attractive.

46. Deforestation and forest degradation accounted for just under 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas

emissions, and action to stop deforestation could provide quick and relatively cost-effective emission reductions. In consequence, Norway had announced a major initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation at the Bali Climate Change Conference, with funding of up to $500 million a year. In Norway's view, emissions from deforestation and forest degradation should be included in the new global agreement under the Framework Convention that it was hoped would be concluded in Copenhagen in 2009. Norway was pleased to observe that other nations were increasingly supporting related endeavours, but noted the risk of proliferation of uncoordinated activities. It therefore stressed the importance of closely coordinated international support for tropical countries in their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

47. There were close links between efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the sustainable management of natural resources and biological diversity. Biodiversity provided essential ecosystem services such as food, water, building materials and medicines, but it was being threatened by climate change. The latest Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity had identified the close links between biodiversity and climate change.

48. Climate change adaptation measures must be integrated with disaster risk reduction in sustainable development efforts. It had been suggested that 1 per cent of ODA should be earmarked for disaster risk reduction, so as to ensure that the developing countries' investments were disaster-proof and thus more resilient to climate change. Norway was prepared to increase its investment in risk reduction to help disaster-prone countries that demonstrated political commitment, but would expect specific results. The Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction was an important channel for such support. Finally, Norway welcomed the creation of the new post of Assistant-Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

49. **Mr. Kalilangwe** (Malawi) noted that the many challenges resulting from rising food and energy costs, poverty and hunger, rapid environmental degradation, climate change and global warming were threatening the attainment of sustainable development in many countries. The most affected were the least developed countries whose economies were predominantly agriculture-based, such as Malawi. Erratic rains, prolonged periods of drought and flash floods continued to harm agricultural production and, consequently, the ability of the Malawi Government to scale up sustained economic growth in order to eradicate poverty and hunger.

50. For those reasons, while Malawi noted that progress was being made to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change at the international level, it believed that more needed to be done. In particular, the assistance, both financial and technical, given to the least developed countries to fight climate change needed to be doubled. Malawi once again called for adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in the fight against climate change, given that the emission of greenhouse gases from the least developed countries was negligible.

51. In that regard, Malawi hoped that the forthcoming Climate Change Conference would provide an opportunity to reflect further on how to assist poor countries to address the effects of climate change and achieve sustainable development for their people. It hoped that the Conference would be conducted in a fair and transparent manner to ensure that the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol were implemented within the agreed time frame.

52. **Mr. Alahraf** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that desertification claimed hundreds of square kilometres and displaced millions of people every year, and threatened to reverse progress towards development in Africa in particular. Efforts needed to be redoubled to implement the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2008-2018), and in particular to ensure the financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building needed by the countries that suffered most from desertification. He called for cooperation within the Hyogo Framework for Action to ensure coherence and synergy between climate change and disaster risk reduction agendas, for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and for proper preparation for the upcoming seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Strong international partnerships were necessary to address the food crisis, especially in Africa.

53. **Mr. Khaleel** (Maldives) said that, although many small island developing States had made substantial strides in economic growth, social development, and environmental conservation, such progress would always be precarious. They were economically more at risk than other developing countries, because of their vulnerability to external shocks, dependence on international trade, and exposure to natural disasters. The current food, fuel and financial crises would have severe and widespread effects on the sustainable development of small island States and other vulnerable countries such as the least developed countries. Significant strains on balance of payments and increases in inflation rates amidst fears of a global recession could hinder the progress made to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was therefore necessary to act in an integrated and coordinated manner at all levels in order to alleviate the impact of the crises and to create global partnerships for their solution in both the short and long term. Increased official development assistance and technology transfer were necessary to address growing challenges of food security and to support action on mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

54. Despite significant development challenges owing to its unique geography, small and widely dispersed population and acute economic and environmental vulnerability, Maldives had achieved an admirable level of socio-economic growth over the past three decades, with one of the highest rates of gross domestic product growth in South Asia.

55. The MDGs were fully incorporated in the country's national development priorities and Maldives were on track to meet most of the targets by 2015. It had already achieved the Goals of halving extreme poverty and providing universal primary education, and was well on track in the areas of reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. Ensuring environmental sustainability and achieving gender equality remained key challenges, however.

56. His country's ability to maintain and improve on that remarkable level of development was being undermined on a daily basis by the malign impacts of global environmental degradation. For Maldives, climate change was not a distant possibility; it was a present reality. Sea level rise, flooding, diminished availability of fresh water and coral bleaching due to warming seas had become frequent phenomena, already affecting the country's economy and the lives and livelihoods of its small communities. Volatile and extreme weather patterns continued to force the country to divert its limited resources away from strategic development to recovery and reconstruction.

57. Maldives and other small island developing States contributed the least to global warming and yet their development and indeed very existence were fundamentally threatened by global warming and its consequences. All were aware of the grim predictions in the fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. If those predictions were accurate, Maldives and many other small island developing States would cease to exist within a relatively short period of time. The situation would create a threat to human security directly compromising the most fundamental rights, including the right to life and to self-determination, for millions of people around the world. Addressing the injustices of climate change was an obligation of the entire international community. A comprehensive rights-informed approach to sustainable and just development, anchored in the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities, was the logical and ethical way forward.

58. On the initiative of Maldives and 80 other like-minded countries, the Human Rights Council had recently recognized, for the first time, the link between human rights and climate change. The Council would formally debate the issue at its tenth session, in March 2009, and it was to be hoped that due consideration would be given to the outcome of the debate by those working in the context of the Framework Convention on Climate Change to reach agreement on an effective and equitable successor to the Kyoto Protocol.

59. **Mrs. Houngbedji** (Benin), referring to the current international financial crisis, noted how quickly the developed countries had mobilized staggering sums of money in an attempt to quell the crisis before it resulted in a genuine recession. It was to be hoped that the financial crisis would not totally overshadow the other current crises, such as those of food security, the environment (resulting from climate change), deforestation, desertification, indebtedness, and so on. The reaction to the financial crisis was proof that the world did have sufficient resources to allow a response of solidarity to economic development problems. The solidarity shown in the Western world could and should extend to all of humanity, in particular with regard to the issue of sustainable development. Benin was

confident that such solidarity would, in fact, be demonstrated.

60. The links had to be investigated between desertification, biological diversity, and climate change, with a view to finding solutions to the severe pressures exerted on natural resources by energy needs, agricultural activities and population growth. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had recognized the fight against desertification as a major contribution to poverty reduction. Stressing the importance of the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Desertification, as the only legally binding universal instrument dealing with degradation of the soil and desertification, Benin called for an increase in the resources made available in support of the Framework Convention, and was pleased to note the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariat of the Framework Convention and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the commencement of a strategic work plan.

61. As one of the least developed countries, Benin was extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change, which would probably increase the frequency, severity and duration of drought in many arid and semi-arid zones. The developed countries, including the United States of America, should make concessions that would enable quantitative commitments for the reduction of greenhouse gases in the post-2012 time frame. In that context, the Economic Community of West African States and the Government of Benin had organized a subregional conference in October 2008 to draw up a regional strategy for West Africa.

62. **Mr. Waramit** (Thailand) said that his country's approach to sustainable development was based on the concept of a "sufficiency economy", which not only complemented the three pillars of sustainable development but was also a traditional philosophy embraced by the Thai people.

63. While natural disasters were inevitable, their worst effects could be offset by developed countries providing effective assistance to the developing world, particularly by means of early warning systems and disaster preparedness initiatives. His delegation therefore encouraged the United Nations to play a more proactive role in that context through the involvement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in the establishment of international early warning system networks.

64. The Tsunami Regional Trust Fund had been established with the aim of providing an early warning system for the Asia and Pacific region. His delegation particularly welcomed the financial contributions made by the Governments of Turkey and Nepal and the experts provided by the Government of the Netherlands. It also called on the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to step up its efforts in support of the full implementation of the Fund.

65. The impact of climate change would hamper sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs. His delegation therefore particularly looked forward to the adoption at the fourteenth session of the Climate Change Conference of the programme of work and action plan agreed under the Bali Road Map. Given that sustainable development was wide in scope and cross-cutting in nature, synergies should be strengthened at all levels between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

66. Developed countries should also consider providing developing countries with increased assistance in order to help them adapt to climate change and meet the internationally agreed development goals. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the fact that the Adaptation Fund would shortly be fully operational and called for concerted international financial and technical assistance, in addition to existing ODA commitments.

67. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that his country supported the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and had consistently contributed to efforts to address the problem of sustainable development at both national and international levels. Climate change and energy security were global and interrelated problems whose solution would require a global partnership.

68. Belarus was the first country to have proposed an amendment whereby it would be added to annex B of the Kyoto Protocol and undertake to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. While the amendment had been adopted in Nairobi by the Climate Change Conference, it had unfortunately been ratified by only nine States. His delegation called on the parties to the

Kyoto Protocol and the representatives of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to complete the internal procedures necessary for the amendment to enter into force.

69. The post-Kyoto regime must provide a more flexible mechanism that would allow States to assume voluntary obligations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Otherwise, the current absurd situation would continue whereby a State willing to shoulder such obligations was prevented from doing so because of red tape.

70. Belarus placed a great deal of emphasis on the modernization of productive capacities and on the introduction of new technologies, including the use of non-conventional and renewable energy sources. Over the period from 1996 to 2006, Belarus had reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 130 tonnes of carbon dioxide by enhancing the efficiency of power-generating sources, increasing the use of natural gas and introducing energy-saving technologies. In that context, the Government of Belarus was implementing a national energy-saving programme for the period 2006-2010 with a view to reducing energy expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). As a consequence, national emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere should be reduced by at least 12 million tonnes.

71. His delegation welcomed the outcomes of the Bali Climate Change Conference, particularly the adoption by consensus of the Bali Action Plan, and reiterated its readiness to work constructively with others with a view to reaching agreement on a post-Kyoto regime.

72. Alongside agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the international community should develop an effective system of adaptation and technology transfer measures. There was also an obvious need to establish an effective international mechanism for the transfer of energy-efficient and energy-saving technologies in the context of the current financial and energy crises.

73. Belarus had called for the holding of a thematic debate during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the use of alternative and renewable energy sources as the global commons. The debate was an opportunity to discuss a mechanism to provide access to advanced energy technologies to all countries without any infringement of intellectual property rights. Informal hearings could also be a first step towards developing an agreed global plan to overcome the energy crisis.

74. The General Assembly's thematic debates on climate change had demonstrated that there was political support for joint international efforts to combat climate change. The Poznań Climate Change Conference should make an important contribution to improving the strategic approach to international cooperation in that field.

75. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) said that the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would have the important task of issuing recommendations to overcome the food crisis and to minimize such risks in the future. An analysis of the reasons for the increase in food prices would make it possible to tackle the lack of investment in agriculture. In many developing countries, there was an urgent need to increase food production and investment in rural and agricultural development while prioritizing local agricultural production.

76. The Bali Climate Change Conference had provided a basis for the future international climate regime and the time had come to implement the Bali Road Map and the Bali Action Plan. All Governments should adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. While developed countries and other major emitters must all make substantial efforts to reduce their emissions, it should be recognized that the poorest countries would need additional support.

77. The operationalization of the Adaptation Fund was an immediate priority in order to lend key assistance to the most vulnerable countries during both the current commitment period and the post-Kyoto period. It was therefore important for the Fund to be established on solid financial, institutional and operational bases. Switzerland had already made conceptual and financial contributions to the establishment of the Fund. In that context, his delegation recalled the Swiss proposal to finance adaptation through a financial mechanism based on a global carbon dioxide emissions levy, which could make an important contribution to reducing risks of natural disasters.

78. The advocacy and coordination efforts of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction should be pursued in the context of the climate change

negotiations. While global warming would undoubtedly be a major factor leading to a higher incidence of natural disasters, it was also important not to ignore other sources of vulnerability, such as population growth, unchecked urbanization and damage to ecosystems.

79. The International Strategy mechanisms needed to be strengthened in terms both of governance of the system and of national implementation. His delegation encouraged the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its partners to establish flexible mechanisms that were adapted to different geographical contexts. For example, efforts aimed at reducing the risk of drought and increasing food security needed to be combined with those designed to curb desertification, conserve biodiversity and adapt to climate change.

80. In order to ensure a substantial increase in investments in the Hyogo Framework for Action, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction must be able to access the contributions of development partners and climate change adaptation funds. Public and private partnerships should also be further encouraged. The agencies that were partners in the Strategy should pursue their coordination efforts through a joint action programme and make sufficient resources available to achieve the objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

81. The ability of UNEP to provide general guidelines and policy advice should be strengthened, so that the Programme could continue to play an important role in the process of international environmental governance. His delegation welcomed the commitment of UNEP to strengthen its results-based management. In that context, the medium-term strategy of UNEP provided an important basis for establishing that institution's programme of work. His delegation also appreciated the determined efforts of UNEP to promote a coherent international regime for chemical products and hazardous waste. Those were areas where UNEP had key competencies and expertise, which would enable it to make a substantial contribution to formulating the necessary political framework for sustainable development.

82. **Mr. Vickery** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that the Federation's approach to sustainable development was aimed at reducing and managing risks while increasing resilience at the community level. Governments and other stakeholders had expressed support for that approach, which included efforts to address climate change, through the adoption of a declaration entitled "Together for Humanity" at the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. At that Conference, Governments had also agreed to include climate change issues in the agendas of their respective national disaster management committees and then to work with IFRC to find the best way forward for their countries and regions.

83. Risk management strategies were central to IFRC efforts to combat climate change. For example, over the past decade the Vietnamese Red Cross had planted some 175 square metres of mangrove forest along almost 200 kilometres of national coastline, thereby improving the livelihoods of an estimated 7,750 families and markedly improving their resilience to climate change. Another example based on a different approach was the Nepalese Red Cross Society's Community Development Programme, which aimed to address the health hazards confronting the most vulnerable people in Nepalese society, particularly women and children, and to enhance their social status. Both examples demonstrated how to build sustainability in communities through programmes that protected the dignity of people and enabled them to contribute meaningfully to their own prosperity and to the achievement of the MDGs.

84. The integration of risk management into the adaptation agenda would require changes not only in policy but also in mindset. The Federation had therefore agreed to convene an inter-agency task force to provide inputs on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, among other issues, in preparation for the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009. To that end, IFRC would be working at the forthcoming Poznan Conference to achieve a much stronger commitment to sustainable development from other actors at the community level. It would also expect strong governmental commitments to support community programming.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.